WEEKLY NEWS LETTER

THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE A. F. OF L., BY INSTRUCTION OF ST. LOUIS CONVENTION, DIRECTED THE OFFICERS AT HEADQUARTERS TO FURNISH A WEEKLY NEWS LETTER, FREE OF COST, TO ALL OFFICIAL LABOR PUBLICATIONS,

Containing a brief summary of important matters, affecting labor, occurring in the industrial, legislative and judicial fields, and such other information that will further the development and progress of the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR
HEADQUARTERS
801-809 G ST. N. W., WASHINGTON, D. C.
FRANK MORRISON, SECRETARY SAMUEL GOMPERS, PRESIDENT

No. 36.

A STATEMENT

To the American Public on the McNamara Case:

The McNamaras stand before the world self convicted of great crimes. They have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment — J. B. during his natural life, J. J. for fifteen years. The position of labor in connection with the effort made to afford these men an opportunity for adequate defense before the courts has been attacked and misrepresented to such a degree as to require a clear statement at the hands of the undersigned, who are in the best position to make an authoritative statement at this time — a statement that will be strengthened by some review of the principal points of the case.

Was there an explosion of gas in the Los Angeles Times building when it was destroyed? Immediately after the disaster, the press reports stated that men who had been at work in the building spoke of an odor of gas for some time previous to the explosion. Gas leakage in the building, it came out later, had been known to others. Many conservative trade union officials, newspaper writers and publicists, on making an investigation in Los Angeles, soon after, were positive in assuring the public that they believed gas had destroyed the building. Among the mine workers, not one man, so far as information has reached us, has believed the destructive explosive was dynamite. Prominent officials of the United Mine Workers, cautious, honorable men, whose word is taken as truth by all who know them, who are familiar with mining explosives, declared that the effect of the explosion was not that which follows a discharge of dynamite. Were all these men speaking from blind partisanship or from honest conviction? Were they utterly mistaken? The answer has now been supplied by the prosecution. While the "gas theory" was being hooted at by enemies of the unions, while even so late as last Friday night, an editor of the New York Times was indicting a contemptuous slur at John Mitchell for supposing "that proof would be adduced to show that an explosion of gas destroyed the Los Angeles Times building," the prosecution knew that gas was an agency in the explosion and a great factor in the destruction which ensued. W. J. Burns in a press interview Saturday last said: "Why, McManigal told us in his first confession that McNamara turned open the stopcocks of the gas mains of the building when he set the bomb. We knew all the time that a part of the explosion was due to gas." Now, the possible terrific force of a gas explosion, even in the open air, was shown in the wreckage caused by the accident at the Grand

Central Station, New York, December 19, 1910, while the Los Angeles disaster was being discussed throughout the country.

The fact of a gas explosion led all others in importance in the minds of the organized workers! Nearly all of them were convinced that it was an established fact. The most cautious reasoners among them regarded the possibilities of the fact sufficient to hold to belief in it until proof to the contrary could be produced. They were willing to suspend conclusive judgment while awaiting evidence.

The public also wanted such facts regarding the circumstances of the explosion as could be accepted as evidence of the way it came about. What was given the public, first and foremost? On the instant, at the hearing of the explosion, H. B. Otis broke into a savage denunication of trade unionists, accusing them of having caused the disaster, and he has ever since declared it was the result of dynamite. By this course, he diverted the case from one in which citizens in commnn should have proceeded, through legal methods alone, to search for the truth. He threw the unions on their defense, outraged them, insulted their officials, raised animosities that could have been avoided. He was at once backed up by the small circle of bitter enemies of trade unionism, whose fulminations were largely made up of transparent falsehoods leveled at trade unions in general and at the leaders of trade unions.

Despite all clamor it must be remembered that, with few exceptions, the international trade unions, more than 120 in number, are and have usually been in normal business relations with the employers of their members. Many of them have for years arranged their differences and their working conditions with employers through trade agreements or other methods resulting in a minimum of loss through suspension of work. Violence in cases of dispute are not common to them. Trade unionists have been made aware, by experience, that stories of disorder by unionists during strikes or lockouts have been systematically exaggerated.

Therefore, aware of the necessity of trade union organization, of the incalculable amount of good in various forms done by and through their unions every year, of the long and bitter campaign carried on by Otis, Kirby, Post and others, to destroy trade unionism, and perceiving the intention of these plotters and their detectives to ignore the apparent, and, to their minds, proven cause of the Times disaster, and to turn that terrible event solely to account as a means of discrediting trade unionism, the unions energetically stated their side of the case to the American public as they saw it at that time.

When, after six months, the McNamaras were arrested, it was in Russian style, not American. Holding the members of the Executive Board of the Structural Iron Workers in confinement without warrant, hurrying J. J. McNamara away from Indianapolis in an automobile and by circuitous routes taken to California - what were these but features of high-handed irregularity, and tyrannical lawlessness, known in arrests in Russia that precede transportation of prosecuted citizens to Siberia? And, when Detective Burns has throughout been doubted by so great a part of the American public, it has been largely the fault of his proceedings at this point, and of his own defouling the reputation of his craft, for has he not said? "Private detectives, as a class, are the worst lot of blackmailing scoundrels that live outside of prisons." (see page 357, McClure's Magazine, August, 1911.)

J. J. McNamara had not been of sufficient prominence among labor men to be the subject of discussion as a leading figure, but what was generally known of him was to his credit. He was seen at conventions

as a man of pleasing apparence and of mild manner. He was spoken of as self-educated and a faithful secretary of his organization. His speech and his writings for his magazine were reputed to be conservative. When placed under arrest, and throughout his imprisonment, his bearing was undemonstrative. His letters and telegrams to officials of the A. F. of L. and the Atlanta convention were concise and without suspicious characteristics. In no wise, to common observation, had he shown abnormal traits.

Did organized labor properly express its condemnation of violence on hearing of the Los Angeles disaster? It did by interviews, addresses, and publications. The hundreds of union labor papers, in their issues succeeding the event, contained what, taken together, would make volumes, declarative of the sentiments of their editors and of the rank and file of union membership on the subject. All recognized the case as one of mystery, the feeling shown being that of horror at the possibility of any union man being implicated in it. Unions framed resolutions in meetings, declaring that trade unionism was not to be advanced by murderous acts. Union labor officials, and many others, were quoted to similar effect. The president of the American Federation of Labor, the day after the disaster occurred, as published by the St. Louis Star, said:

"Labor does not stand for such outrages, nor contemplate such crime. I cannot believe that a union man has done it, and I deeply hope no one who was connected with the labor movement will be found to have done it. It is inconceivable that a union man should have done this thing. And yet, if it is found that a union man has done it, unionism cannot be blamed for the deed of a man devoid of any human feeling, as the perpetrator of this horrible catastrophe must have been. It was the act of a madman. No one with an ounce of sympathy in his makeup could do aught but contemplate such a crime with the deepest abhorrence."

These facts were further fully presented in the June, 1911, issue of the American Federationist, in a seventeen-page article entitled the "McNamara Case", in which the leading facts up to that time were reviewed. Speaking before the St. Louis Central Labor Union on Sunday, October 2, 1910, the day after the disaster, President Gompers asserted he would "immediately turn the dynamiters over to the proper authorities if he could lay hands on them." The Globe-Democrat also quoted him as saying: "I only wish I knew the actual perpetrators and if I did, take my word for it, I would turn them over to justice." The universal condemnation of a murderous deed in labor circles, ought to be a fact so far beyond question, so easily ascertainable from accessible records, that no man with any regard for his reputation for veracity could deny it. Yet, the New York Times, in an editorial last Saturday, printed this sentence: "From the day when James B. McNamara's bomb blew his twenty-one victims into eternity, down to the present time, no authoriative voice in the ranks of labor has been raised to express the hope that the murderers would be brought to justice, even should they prove to be union men."

Relative to other phases of the McNamara case, the article in the June American Federationist contains these passages:

"It may be said that from that time (the kidnapping) to the present, Detective Burns, Attorney Drew, Editor Otis, O. W. Post, and the active agents of the extremists in the Manufacturers' Association in general have all played to perfection the hysterical characters to which

we are accustomed in the pages of cheap fiction and on the boards of the Bowery class of theatres."

. . . "Nothing more surprised us in the series of audacious acts committed by Detective Burns than his saying to a reporter of the World, May 7, 1911.

" 'Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor, knows by this time that there was no frame-up and that the arrests of the McNamaras and McManigal were not the result of a plant. Why? Because Gompers has been conducting an investigation of his own at Indianapolis that has convinced him that there was no frame-up and no plants.' "

"These assertions of Burns were entirely without foundation. Nothing was brought to our knowledge in Indianapolis or elsewhere that could be used as evidence against the prisoners or to show that the Structural Iron Workers' Union has been conducting a dynamite campaign against the Erectors' Association."

Since the McNamaras' confession Burns has been reiterating this charge. The only "investigation" in which President Gompers participated in Indianapolis was the meeting of the prominent trade unionists held last May 10-12, called by officials of the eight international unions which have their headquarters in that city, and the meeting of the officials of a large number of trade unions called by authority of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, and held at Indianapolis, June 29, 1911. What President Gompers learned there was precisely what everyone attending the conference learned, and that was nothing that helped to solve the mystery of the Los Angeles disaster, or, of criminality of any kind.

Indeed, the unlawful and un-American kidnapping of McNamara formed one of the chief factors of fixing in the minds of the working people of our country that he was innocent. They reasoned, as they had a right to reason, that if there existed evidence of McNamara's guilt of the crime charged, every protection would and should have been accorded him to demonstrate before the courts of Indiana that he was innocent of the crime with which he was charged. His protestations of innocence, his demands to be represented by counsel, were all ruthlessly ignored.

Violence, brutality, destruction of life or property, are foreign to the aims and methods of organized labor of America, and no interest is more severely injured by the employment of such methods, than that of the workers organized in the labor movement. Therefore, quite apart from the spirit of humanitarianism and justice which prompts the activities of the organized labor movement, policy and hopes for success, forbid the resort to violence. The American labor movement and its men are loyal Americans and seek to obtain the abolition of wrongs and the attainment of their rights within the law.

Organized labor of America has no desire to condone the crimes of the McNamaras. It joins in the satisfaction that the majesty of the law and justice has been maintained and the culprits commensurately punished for their crime.

And yet it is an awful commentary upon existing conditions when any one man among all the millions of workers, can bring himself to the frame of mind that the only means to secure justice for labor is in violence, outrage and murder.

It is cruelly unjust to hold the men of the labor movement either legally or morally responsible for the crime of an individual member. No such moral code or legal responsibility is placed upon any other association of men in our country.

In so far as we have the right to speak, in the name of organized

labor, we welcome any investigations which either federal or state courts may undertake. The sessions of the Conventions of the American Federation of Labor are held with open doors that all may see and hear what is being said and done. The books, accounts, and correspondence of the American Federation of Labor are open to any competent authority, who may desire to make a study or an investigation of them.

Will the National Manufacturers Association, the Erectors' Association and the detective agencies extend the same privilege for public investigation and examination of their books and correspondence?

When we were selected as a Committee on Ways and Means to raise and dispense funds for the defense of the McNamaras and the prosecution of the kidnappers, we were fully impressed with the innocence of the accused men. That impression was strengthened by their written and oral protestations of innocence. We here and now, individually and collectively, declare that the first knowledge or intimation of their guilt was conveyed by the press in their confessions of guilt. From the outset we assured all contributors and the public generally that we would publish an accounting of the moneys received, from whom received, and to whom paid. This assurance will be fulfilled. A report in full will first be made to the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, at its meeting to be held at Washington, D. C. January 8, 1912.

The American labor movement has done so much for the workers of our country in improving their condition, in lightening the burdens which the workers have had to bear, bringing light and hope in the homes and in the lives, the factories and the workshops of our country, that it challenges the world of investigators. The organizations of labor of America have been the most potent factors in the establishment and maintenance of the largest measure of industrial peace. Their course is of a conciliatory character, to reach trade agreements with employers, and the faithful adherence to agreements. When industrial conditions become unsettled, they are more largely due to the unreasonableness of employers, who regard every effort of the workers to maintain their rights, and to promote their interests, as an invasion of employers' prerogatives, which are resented with consequent struggles. If employers will be but fair and tolerant, they will find more than a responsive attitude on the part of organized labor, but, of one thing all may rest assured, that with existing conditions of concentrated wealth and industry, the organized toilers of our country realize that there is no hope from abject slavery outside of the protection which the organized labor movement affords.

The men of organized labor, in common with all our people, are grieved beyond expression in words at the loss of life, and the destruction of property, not only in the case under discussion, but in any other case which may have occurred. We are hurt and humiliated to think that any man connected with the labor movement should have been guilty of either. The lesson this grave crime teaches will, however, have its salutatory effect. It will demonstrate now more than ever, the inhumanity, as well as the futility of resorting to violence in the effort to right wrongs, or to attain rights.

In view of the great uplift work in which the men of the labor movement have been and are engaged, and [illegible] the industrial problems with which they have to contend, we insist that our organizations of labor should be judged by what they do and aim to do, rather than to be opposed and stigmatized because one or a few may be recreant to the good name and high ideals of labor, and we appeal to the fair minded citizenship and the press of America for fair treatment.

SAMUEL GOMPERS, President American Federation of Labor, Chairman.
FRANK MORRISON, Secretary American Federation of Labor.
JAMES A. SHORT, President Building Trades Department.
WM. J. SPENCER, Secretary Building Trades Department.
JAS. O'CONNELL, President Metal Trades Department.
A. F. BERRES, Secretary Metal Trades Department.
JOHN B. LENNON, President Union Label Trades Department.
THOMAS F. TRACY, Secretary Union Label Trades Department.

CONSTITUTING THE McNAMARA WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE.
Washington, D. C.,
December 7, 1911.

VOTE OF CONFIDENCE

Washington, Dec. 9.—Among the many telegrams which have reached A. F. of L. headquarters since the confession of the McNamaras, the following is one from Indianapolis, and is self-explanatory:

"Indianapolis, Ind., Dec.5,1911.

"Samuel Gompers, 801-9 G St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

"The conference of executive officers of the international trade unions, with headquarters in Indianapolis, at a meeting today, taking into consideration the aspersions that have been made against you by representatives of hostile associations and private detective agencies, by unanimous vote, adopted a motion declaring their continued confidence in your honesty of purpose and integrity, and expressing the opinion that in your connection with the McNamara case you did only your full duty as the head of the trades union movement on this continent, in view of the circumstances and conditions as we all understood the situation as it then existed. James M. Lynch, President; Frank Duffy, Secretary."

HARRIMAN DEFEATED

Los Angeles, Dec. 9.—Job Harriman, Socialist candidate for mayor, together with all other Socialists on that ticket, were defeated by approximately 25,000 majority.

STRIKE VOTE BEING TAKEN

London, Dec. 2.—The railroad employes of this country, incensed at the conclusions reached by the commission of inquiry, appointed as the result of last summer's strike, are now taking a strike vote to determine whether the report of the commission shall be accepted on trial or cease work until their grievances are adjusted. There appears to be an unanimity of opinion and it is predicted that a large percentage of the men will vote for the strike. The last day for the return of the voting to the headquarters Unity House is Dec. 5.

CONCESSIONS BEING GIVEN

London, Dec. 9.—While the strike vote among Great Britain's railwaymen is in progress, a number of the railroad companies are announcing concessions. It begins to look as though the attitude of the railroad employes is responsible for the concessions being made by the companies.

A CLEAR DECLARATION

Convention of American Federation of Labor Unanimously Adopts Pertinent Recommendations.

Washington, Dec. 9.--The adjustment committee in the Atlanta Convention, aside from dealing with all the specific cases referred to it, concluded its report with a clear declaration -- one craft, one organization -- and recommended its adoption. The declaration was unanimously concurred in. The declaration and recommendatipns are as follows:

"Before closing the report the committee on adjustment wishes to make the following declaration and recommendations: Whatever argument or excuse there might have been in the past for the existence of two organizations of the one craft, we now believe that such argument or excuse is absent. It is the opinion of the committee on adjustment, many of whose members have had to deal with disputes caused by the existence of two organizations of one craft for many years, that the time has arrived for the American Federation of Labor to openly and emphatically declare itself to the effect that, large as this country is, it is not large enough to hold two organizations of the one craft. Therefore your Committee recommends that this Thirty-first annual convention of the American Federation of Labor goes squarely on record in favor of the above declaration, and your Committee further recommends that this convention instruct the President and the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor to carry into effect the principles and purposes involved in this declaration --one craft, one organization."

In the discussion which followed Treasurer Lennon asked if the declaration might not be construed as being in more or less opposition to the action of the Scranton convention on the subject of organization, in that in some instances organizations have the right to contain all the people engaged in the industry. Replying to Treasurer Lennon, Chairman James O'Connell of the adjustment committee, made this statement:

"We had in mind just what Delegate Lennon speaks of, which is not the intention of the committee at all. The motion of the committee recognizes that the trades have that right, but the committee wants this declaration to go out, that if a faction of a trade breaks away or the organization splits, the portion that goes on the outside may know at the very start that there can be no recognition of two divisions of that organization in this Federation, nor can some faction of a craft not yet affiliated with the organization that is affiliated here, some independent portion of a trade on the outside, hold out with the hope that in the future it is possible for that portion of that craft to be chartered by the American Federation of Labor. It does not interfere in any way with the decision and declaration of the Scranton Convention. It recognizes fully the rights of the miners as they are now organized."

It will be noted that by the action taken seceding and dual organizations will hereafter be permanently denied recognition by the American Federation of Labor.

CONVICTS FARMED OUT

Montgomery, Ala., Dec. 9.--The Commissioner's Court has accepted a bid of $1.25 per day for the county convicts, from the Wheeler Company of Birmingham, who are constructing the system of roads for the country.

PLUMBERS AND STEAMFITTERS

Building Trades Committee at Atlanta Convention Urges One Organization for Pipe Fitting Industry.

Washington, Dec. 9.—In the matter of the jurisdictional controversy between the U. A. Plumbers and I. A. Steamfitters, under consideration at the convention of the American Federation of Labor, the Building Trades Committee submitted the following report:

"In the instance of the contention affecting the pipe fitting industry the interests directly involved raise the following questions:

"First: Concentration of effort and efficiency in one general pipe fitting organization; or

Second: Segregation of certain portions of the industry into separately managed and distinctly administered associations.

"In regard to the latter question, the segregated portion of the industry does not, and for many reasons cannot, cover or comprehend in all parts of North America, the portion of the industry it essays to govern in largely populated cities and their immediate environments.

"Therefore, in this instance, the Executive Council holds that both for harmony and for practicability, the pipe fitting trade should be represented in the A. F. of L., also in the Building Trades Department, by one general association of the pipe fitting industry—The United Association of Plumbers, Gas Fitters, Steam Fitters and Steam Fitters' Helpers of the United States and Canada; and, further recommends that the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. be instructed, and the Executive Council of the Building Trades Department be requested to carry this into effect."

A minority report was also submitted, incorporating resolution No. 144 by Delegates J. T. Kindella and John Mangan of the I. A. Steamfitters. After considerable discussion the minority report was lost by a vote of 38 to 135. The majority report was then adopted. The action of the convention was in consonance with the declaration previously endorsed — one craft, one organization.

RAILROAD STRIKE AVERTED

System Federation Reaches Amicable Adjustment of Differences with Rock Island Railroad.

Washington, Dec. 9.—The federated trades on the Rock Island railroad, after negotiations covering a considerable period of time, have succeeded in reaching a satisfactory settlement of the differences which existed. Just prior to the adjustment every indication pointed to an ultimate cessation of work. The main object of the organizations involved was to enter into contractural relations, not as individual unions, but as a federated body comprising all the shop trades. Upon this point the railroad company was reluctant to give way. In the final settlement, however, while the increase in wages was not secured, the system federation has been recognized by the company and all other conditions asked for have been granted.

Milk teamsters of Boston have secured better conditions and higher pay as a result of a short strike.

Painters of Omaha, Neb. secured increase without strike. Steam engineers have also secured several 8 hour contracts.

SPEEDING CONVICTS

Prison Labor Contractors Alleged to Be Introducing Obnoxious System to Increase Production.

Washington, Dec, 9.-THE following is contained in a letter just issued by the National Free Labor Association: "There are well defined rumors that the prisoners at the Rhode Island penitentiary at Howard, whose labor is sold to the Reliance-Sterling Manufacturing company, are being speeded up to a degree that has aroused the indignant remonstrance of social and charity workers. One of the most prominent recently said in a public address: 'Through the support of Warden McOusker the shirt contract was secured while he was chairman of the board, and since his promotion to the position of warden, has been greatly increased in value by the methods he has installed. The efficiency has been secured by the use of certain incentives to increase the activity of the convicts. Increased output for a day results in a plug of tobacco to the convict at night; increased output for a period of three months is rewarded by a small wage, which seldom exceeds $5 per month. To these incentives are added the dungeon, the straight jacket and the gag. Prisioners awating trial are included among the workers in these prison industries. The convicts are forced to their utmost exertions in a line of industry in which they can find no employment upon discharge, and for a pittance which makes the poor house the refuge of their wives and daughters.' "

ANOTHER DEPARTMENT PROPOSED

Washington, Dec. 9.—A resolution was introduced in the last convention of the A. F. of L. proposing, as soon as practical, the calling together of the representatives of the organizations comprising the wearing apparel industries for the purpose of forming a Wearing Apparel Trades Department. After considerable discussion the entire matter was referred to the executive council to ascertain whether the trades comprising this particular industry desired or deemed necessary the organization of such a department.

ENGLAND'S MAN OF THE HOUR

London, Dec. 9.—Mr. Lloyd George has again demonstrated his tremendous influence over the House of Commons. Through his influence a resolution has been unanimously adopted by that body, calling on the railway directors to meet the representatives of the men in order to discuss with them the best method of putting into operation the report of the Railway Commission. The resolution, in effect, favors the recognition of the Railwaymen's Unions and condemns the Railway Directors for the policy of the closed door towards the unions which they have hitherto adopted.

POPULATION MOVEMENT

Glasgow, Scotland, Dec. 9.—A report just out states that the number of passengers at Scottish posts to and from places out of Europe during the first ten months of the present year was 60,934 outward, and 21,776 inward. Of the outward passengers 54,503 persons and of the inward 9,302 persons were regarded as of Scottish nationality.

8-HOUR LAW SAVED

Beaumont, Tex., Dec. 9--An 8-hour bill was passed in the closing days of the last legislature, together with a mass of other bills. Under the state law the governor has to act within twenty days after the adjournment on all measures or they become law. A large number of these bills the governor vetoed, among them the eight-hour bill. The governor did not count Sundays in the twenty days allowed, and in an action before the supreme court that judicial body decided that Sundays must be reckoned in computing the twenty days. As a result the 8-hour law has been saved.

TO STOP MAN STEALING

Washington, Dec. 9.--The practice of shanghaiing men in the ports adjacent to the oyster beds of Chesapeake bay by the sailing masters has reached such a brutal stage that the government, throughthe department of Commerce and Labor, has chartered a swift motor yacht to patrol the oyster fields. Many men have been practically stolen and forced to work on the oyster boats at low wages and under unhealthy, unsanitary and other terrible conditions for long periods of time. The penalty for shanghaiing ranges from a fine of $1,000 and one year in prison to the same fine and five years in prison.

OVERSUPPLY OF LABOR

Victoria, B. C., Dec. 9.--The United States consul here has given publicity through the daily consular reports to the congested labor conditions existing here. Although there are 2,000 men employed on the streets laying fifty miles of paving and other public work, and while the building permits issued far exceed those of a like period a year ago, still there are a greater number of men unemployed than ever before in the history of the city. When the seasonal industries, such as fisheries, building, etc., close for the winter a still larger number of men will be without employment.

HEALTHY MOVEMENT

Peekskill, N. Y., Dec. 9.--The trades unions here have made good progress during the past year. All organizations have increased in membership and effectiveness. The retail clerks recently organized and have succeeded in reducing their hours from 82 per week to 68, and the interest in the central body is keen.

LABOR PAPER INCREASES SIZE

Wilmington, Del., Dec. 9.--The Labor Herald, the local labor publication at this city, owing to increase of business, has increased its size from 4 to 8 pages.

PREPARING FOR NEW LAW

Lawrence, Mass., Dec. 9.--To comply with the 54 hour law for mills and factories which was passed by the State legislature, and which goes into effect on January 1 next, the local mills are planning changes to conform with the law.